



Snack Time Tips and Considerations

For more tips and “how to strategies,” click [HERE](#) to listen to Pre-K Teach & Play podcast episode #17 with guests Alicia Frost and Jolene Chavez.

Tip #1: Be clear about “What’s your What”

Teaching Considerations and Reminders

- Often we jump too quickly to thinking about how an “open snack” would look in our daily routine or immediately we “hear shark music” about the barriers. When we take a minute to think about “what” we want to achieve during snack, the “how” it is offered becomes much clearer.
- Snack provides opportunities for children to learn skills such as measuring, reasoning, impulse control, and rhyming. Knowing “what” you want to teach will allow you to intentionally address 100s of desired outcomes. Try creating an embedding matrix to plan how you will intentionally teach during snack and to show others, why snack is a critical part of the daily routine, even a 2.5-hour routine. **See a sample embedding matrix on the next page.**

Tip #2: Encourage children to “listen” to their bodies

Teaching Considerations and Reminders

- We ask children to make good choices and to notice when they are feeling “flooded” with emotion. We encourage them to notice these feelings, to trust these feelings, and to act to regain a more neutral state. Why then would we, at the same time, tell them not to listen to their bodies when they feel hungry, thirsty, or even tired?
- Try any number of [mindful eating activities](#). You might be surprised what you and the children learn.

Tip #3: Use snack time to build relationships and teach self-regulation skills

Teaching Considerations and Reminders

- Try seeing snack time (open or otherwise) as an opportunity for building relationships between all members of your classroom community. Be sure to allow each adult the opportunity to sit for even a few minutes and share a meal with others. This shared time allows everyone to gain a better understanding of the children’s lives outside of the school routine.
- Snack also provides opportunities to build relationships between peers, engage in interesting and personal conversations, and to practice a host of self-regulation skills such as the ability to delay gratification, solve problems, take the perspective of others, and plan before acting.



Sample Embedding Matrix

What to Teach	Classification	Self-regulation	Spatial Vocabulary
	<p>Ability to group/sort animals, events, objects, people, sounds, etc., based upon various attributes.</p> <p>Attributes represent the distinctive or inherent characteristics or property of objects, people, and/or events. Knowledge of attributes allows children to understand the cause or source, the criteria used to group things, and to describe and recognize features.</p> <p>Children often demonstrate understanding of the attributes of objects, people, and/or events using color, quality, shape, and texture concepts and terms.</p>	<p>Ability to manage “cognition and emotion to enable goal-directed actions such as organizing behavior, controlling impulses, and solving problems constructively” (Murray, Rosanbalm, & Christopoulos, 2016).</p> <p>Children demonstrate self-regulation skills by making plans before taking actions, solving problems, taking the perspective of others, getting, keeping, and shifting attention, delaying gratification, ignoring distractions, adapting to change, moving and acting deliberately, considering alternatives, recalling information, and following directions.</p>	<p>Ability to describe an object’s position in space relative to other nearby objects (i.e., the position, where, or the way objects, people, and/or events are situated).</p> <p>Children demonstrate understanding of concepts and terms related to spatial vocabulary including, but not limited to: in, out, on, off, under, up, down, over, here, there, where, above, below, on top of, high, low, top, middle, bottom, far, near, next to, around, behind, start, away, beside, end, forward, outside, back, front, and between.</p>
Open Snack Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm the snack schedule with children to create a menu that includes liquids and solids for each day of the week. • Use self-talk by saying, “We are going to have a liquid and a solid for snack. A liquid can be poured. Milk is a liquid.” • Create a visual (e.g., Venn diagram) for children to sort the empty containers by liquids and solids (e.g. milk and soup containers versus cracker and raisin containers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct children by saying, “Before you take more, ask yourself if your tummy has had enough.” • Use self-talk by saying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “When I don’t think I will like how something tastes, I sometimes feel like scrunching up my face, but then I remember I can give it a try and then decide if I like it.” ○ “I still feel hungry, so I’m going to ask for more.” • Ask the question, “What would happen if we ran out of plates/cups/napkins/food?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask any of the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Who is sitting beside you?” ○ “Are the children, in the block area, near or far from our snack table?” ○ “What do you think is at the bottom of the cracker box?” • Use self-talk by saying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I’m going to start by peeling my banana.” ○ “I’m looking forward to going outside after snack.” ○ “I need to take the lid off before I can pour more.”